



Morning Alert - Tuesday, June 5, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TV Asahi, and most national dailies, led with reports that the Finance Ministry admitted on Monday that then-Financial Bureau chief Sagawa instructed ministry officials to alter documents related to Moritomo Gakuen. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports on the suspicious death of a real estate mogul in Wakayama. TBS gave top play to an update on the scandal involving Nihon University's football team.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe comments on upcoming U.S.-Japan summit

Sankei highlighted remarks made to senior ruling officials on Monday by Prime Minister Abe, who commented on the planned summit with President Trump at the White House later this week by saying: "With the President I am planning to exchange the most up-to-date information on North Korea and adjust our policies prior to the U.S.-North Korea summit. I would like to reaffirm close bilateral cooperation to resolve, in particular, the abduction issue, which is of utmost importance." With regard to his attendance at the G7 summit in Canada after his Washington trip, the premier vowed to make utmost efforts to ensure that the leaders can issue a "strong message" in support of a successful summit between the U.S. and North Korea in Singapore.

As for the G7 summit, Nikkei wrote that the Japanese leader's goal of serving as a "bridge" between the U.S. and European leaders may be difficult to achieve due to a deep division between them over the U.S. tariffs on metals and the Iran nuclear deal. The daily projected heated discussions among the participants on these topics, predicting that President Trump may become isolated. Pointing out that Abe needs to take a concerted approach with his European and Canadian counterparts on the trade front while also maintaining close coordination with the U.S. leader on North Korea, the article

speculated that Abe will be forced to walk a tightrope. The premier commented on the planned G7 discussions on trade by saying: "I would like to hold candid discussions with my colleagues amid rising protectionism and inward-looking tendencies.... I will exercise leadership so as to strengthen the free trade system and create rules that achieve a 'win-win' global economy." The same article quoted an unnamed senior MOFA official as saying about the upcoming U.S.-Japan summit: "Top priority will be given to bilateral coordination on North Korea." The official predicted that the premier may opt not to focus on trade issues to avoid provoking President Trump.

Mainichi quoted an unnamed senior MOFA official as saying in regard to President's Trump's remark about not wanting to use the term "maximum pressure," "We don't understand his true intention." The paper quoted a GOJ source as saying: "PM Abe will explain to the President once again the significance of the sanctions" in the Washington summit.

Kono declines to comment on President Trump's remarks on North Korea

Asahi took up remarks made at the Diet on Monday by Foreign Minister Kono, who was asked by an opposition lawmaker to comment on President Trump's remark to the press yesterday that during his meeting with Kim Jong Un's "right-hand man" the President said the issue of human rights was not addressed. Kono said: "I'm not going to comment on every remark the President makes." The minister reportedly stressed that communications with the USG about the DPRK are going smoothly. Asked by the same opposition politician if the Abe administration subscribes to the U.S. leader's comment that he no longer wants to use the phrase "maximum pressure," Kono stated simply: "We will implement and maintain economic sanctions as mandated by UN resolutions."

Sankei and Nikkei took up separate parliamentary remarks on the same subject by the foreign minister in which he disclosed that the abduction issue has been brought up during ongoing consultations between the U.S. and North Korea in preparation for the summit in Singapore. While stopping short of going into details, Kono emphasized that the U.S. government considers the abduction issue as important as the nuclear and missile issues.

Putin invites Kim Jong Un to visit Vladivostok

Asahi, Nikkei, and Mainichi reported from Moscow on a local media story saying that Russian President Putin has invited DPRK leader Kim Jong Un to make an official visit to Vladivostok in September to attend an international economic conference. The invitation was extended when Foreign Minister Lavrov met with Kim in Pyongyang on May 31.

DPRK top brass replaced by moderates

All national papers except Asahi picked up South Korean media reports saying DPRK leader Kim Jong Un has apparently dismissed the hardliners in his military and replaced them with "moderates," perhaps in a bid to contain opposition to his peace overture to the U.S. ahead of his sit-down with President Trump in Singapore. The defense minister and chief of staff, as well as the general in

charge of controlling the military from the ruling Workers' Party, have reportedly been replaced by younger, more moderate officers.

Japan, France to launch maritime dialogue with China in mind

Monday evening's Yomiuri front-paged the disclosure by several GOJ sources that when visiting Paris in mid-July for a summit meeting with President Macron, Prime Minister Abe is likely to officially endorse a French proposal to create a bilateral mechanism to discuss issues at sea in order to safeguard maritime interests in the Asia-Pacific region against China's maritime advancement. Under the envisaged framework, which apparently is partly intended to raise France's profile in the Western Pacific, the two governments are expected to discuss such issues as joint military training and energy development at sea. The Japanese side has reportedly welcomed the French proposal since it is compatible with Abe's policy initiative of creating a "free and open Indo-Pacific." Tokyo is eager to expand its network of foreign partners willing to counter China's militarization of the South China Sea.

SECURITY

Two USAF Ospreys make "emergency landing" on Kagoshima island

All national dailies except Nikkei wrote that two USAF CV-22s made what the dailies described as an "emergency landing" at Amami Airport in Kagoshima Prefecture on Monday afternoon in response to a warning light in the cockpit of one of the planes. The two Ospreys were reportedly heading for MCAS Futenma from Yokota AB along with three other tilt-rotor planes. No injuries, damage, or disruption of airport operations was reported. One of the two Ospreys reportedly took off a few hours later. Pointing out that the municipal leaders in the vicinity of the Yokota base had asked the Defense Ministry to ensure safe operations of the tilt-rotor planes earlier in the day, Asahi quoted Defense Minister Onodera as saying: "I think it was a precautionary landing. We will continue to call on the U.S. military to operate aircraft safely."

